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Work–Family Boundary Dynamics

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boundary management, work–family conflict, border theory, boundary theory, flexibility

Abstract

Theory, constructs, and research with regard to individual work–family boundary management dynamics are reviewed with the goal of promoting a greater understanding and integration of the existing literature. The article begins by noting trends that have contributed to interest in the topic, and then outlines major theoretical perspectives on boundary management and boundary characteristics, integration/segmentation, and associated constructs. It next notes limitations of existing research and concludes with recommendations for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, employers, societies, and individuals have come to recognize that the work and family lives of individuals are intertwined and consistently influence one another (Kanter 1977). This basic understanding of the interdependencies between work and family roles has helped fuel exponential growth in research focused on the intersection of the two realms (for reviews, see Allen 2012, Hammer & Zimmerman 2011). Within the work–family literature, one topic gaining interest is work–family boundary dynamics. Work–family boundary dynamics concern the socially constructed lines of demarcation between work and family roles, and the ways in which individuals maintain, negotiate, and transition across the lines created (Ashforth et al. 2000, Clark 2000). The basic questions of interest are how individuals draw the line between and transition across work and family roles in an effort to achieve work–family balance.

The growing interest in boundary management can be attributed, at least in part, to increasing overlap between the home and family domains. Over the past several decades, the boundary between work and family systems has become increasingly permeable owing to several emerging trends and factors. First, the number of Americans who report that they check their work-related email on weekends, on vacation, and before and after their regular workdays has increased since 2002 (Madden & Jones 2008). Second, the economic recession coupled with greater access to technology has fueled an increase in home-based businesses (Small Bus. Success Index 2009). Indeed, more than half of all businesses in the United States are based in homes (Beale 2004). Third, the number of individuals telecommuting is growing. In 2005, it was estimated that 1,819,355 workers telecommuted; that number grew to 3,148,313 in 2011 (Glob. Workplace Anal. 2013). It has been estimated that 45% of employees report doing at least some amount of work while at home (Madden & Jones 2008). Together, these phenomena have increased the number of times individuals transition between work and family roles, and have amplified opportunities for role blurring to occur (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell 2006).

Within the work–family literature, boundary management can be considered from an individual perspective (e.g., the tactics or strategies that individuals use to manage work and family roles) and from an organizational perspective (e.g., policies and practices, such as flexible work schedules, that organizations use to help individuals navigate work and family roles) (e.g., Kreiner 2006). In this article, we choose to focus on individual work–family boundary dynamics because, as noted by Kreiner et al. (2009), considerably more attention has been paid to organizational-level policies for managing work and family than to the individual-level processes. Thus, our intent is to provide greater focus on ways in which individuals manage the work and family interface. However, we do discuss perceptions about the availability of flexible work arrangements and their use as they pertain to individual boundary management. Moreover, it should be noted that organizational policies and practices often constrain individuals with regard to managing boundaries (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell 2006).

The overarching goal of this review is to facilitate greater understanding and integration between theory and research that pertain to work and family boundary management. In the sections that follow, we review the major theories associated with boundary management—namely, boundary theory and border theory—as well as boundary characteristics. We then discuss boundary management including the concept of integration/segmentation. Next, we explore related constructs in the literature, including role blurring, interruptions, psychological detachment from work, and work and family role transitions. We then outline boundary management styles and tactics. Along the way, we identify the similarities and differences among these various concepts. We close with a discussion of ideas for future research.

BRIEF HISTORY AND REVIEW OF MAJOR RELEVANT THEORIES

Creating and maintaining boundaries are fundamental to human nature (Nippert-Eng 1996, Zerubavel 1991). Two theories play a prominent part in understanding work–family boundary management, boundary theory, and border theory. Both theories are rooted in role theory, in particular organizational role theory (Biddle 1986, Kahn et al. 1964, Katz & Kahn 1978). Roles, which consist of recurrent activities within the social system that yield organizational output, play a prominent part in life. Katz & Kahn (1978) define an organization as an open system of roles. Boundaries around work and family and the way that individuals manage them can be a source of order by clearly delineating expected behaviors for each role and forming the foundation for interactions with others. The boundaries, however, can also be a source of conflict by making the transitions between roles more difficult. Inter-role conflict occurs when role pressures associated with membership in one group conflict with role pressures associated with membership in other groups (Kahn et al. 1964). Based on the work of Kahn et al. (1964), Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) define work–family conflict as a specific form of inter-role conflict in which work and family roles are mutually discordant in some respect. Work–family conflict research has been a dominant feature within the work–family literature, and effective transitioning from one role to another is thought to be one way in which individuals can minimize work–family conflict.

Boundary Theory

Boundary theory focuses on the ways that people create, maintain, or change boundaries in an effort to simplify and classify the world around them (Ashforth et al. 2000, Zerubavel 1991). It evolved from the classic sociological work of Nippert-Eng (1996) and is based on a general cognitive theory of social classification that focuses on outcomes such as the meanings people assign to work and to home and the ease of transitions between the two. As applied to the work–family literature, boundary theory concerns the cognitive, physical, and/or behavioral boundaries existing between individuals' work and family domains that define the two entities as distinct from one another (Ashforth et al. 2000, Hall & Richter 1988, Nippert-Eng 1996). Boundaries can range from thick (associated with keeping work and family separate) to thin (associated with blending work and family).

Roles tend to be bounded in space and time, in that they are more relevant within specific locations and at specific times of the day and the week. For example, the employee role is more likely to be enacted while an individual is physically at the organizational worksite Monday through Friday during the day, whereas the family role is more likely to be enacted while at home during the weekend and evenings. Boundary theory focuses on the transitions that occur across roles. Ashforth et al. (2000) delineate macro and micro role transitions. Macro transitions are those that are infrequent and often involve permanent change (e.g., a promotion), whereas micro transitions are recurring transitions that occur on a frequent basis (e.g., the commute from home to work to home again). Work–family researchers have focused primarily on the micro role transitions.

Border Theory

Border theory concerns the boundaries that divide the times, places, and people associated with work versus family roles (Clark 2000). Clark (2000) states that border theory is a theory about work–family balance, suggesting that work–family balance can be attained in multiple ways depending on factors such as the similarity of the work and family domains and the strength of the boundaries between domains. Border theory suggests that individuals cross borders daily, both physically and psychologically, as they move between work and home. Borders are the lines of

demarcation between domains and take three main forms: physical, temporal, and psychological. Physical borders define where role-domain behavior occurs. Temporal borders determine when role-specific work is done. Psychological borders are rules created by individuals with regard to when thinking patterns, behavior patterns, and emotions are appropriate for one domain but not for the other.

According to border theory, domain members, referred to as border keepers, also play a role in boundary management. For example, supervisors act as border keepers within the work domain, and spouses act as border keepers within the home domain. Border keepers are involved in the negotiation of what constitutes a domain and where the borders between domains lie. They may have their own views with regard to what constitutes work and family and offer differing degrees of flexibility that impact the ease with which individuals can cross borders in order to deal with competing work and family demands. For example, a supervisor may not permit personal phone calls at work, thereby preventing the family from intruding on the work domain.

Boundary/Border Characteristics

Both theories identify characteristics that are associated with boundaries/borders. Role boundaries refer to what delineates the scope of a given role (e.g., parent, spouse, employee) (Ashforth et al. 2000). In their work on daily work and home transitions, Hall & Richter (1988) note that domains are separated by boundaries and that these boundaries are composed of two dimensions: flexibility and permeability. Flexibility is the degree that the spatial and temporal boundaries are pliable. More flexible boundaries permit roles to be enacted in a variety of settings (e.g., a remote worker) and at varying times (e.g., a family-run farm), whereas less flexible boundaries restrict when and where a role may be enacted (e.g., patient care providers within a hospital setting). Permeability describes the extent to which a person physically located in one domain may be psychologically or behaviorally involved with another domain. For example, an employee who takes phone calls from a spouse while at work has a work-role boundary that is permeable.

Boundaries are also influenced by the degree of overlap in the people that occupy each domain; the degree that objects and the ambient surroundings are similar; and the degree that an individual thinks, acts, and presents him/herself in a similar way in each domain (Nippert-Eng 1996). Nippert-Eng (1996) uses the term role referencing, which refers to the extent that an individual acknowledges one role while in a different role domain. For example, an individual who displays pictures of family within the office at work, uses a similar design aesthetic at both work and home, and talks about family issues at work is an individual with a high degree of role referencing of family to work. Similarly, Ashforth et al. (2000) note the importance of role identities in determining the ease with which individuals are able to transition across boundaries. The more common features that role identities (e.g., occupational identity, parental identity) share, the easier it is to transition across roles. For example, an individual with the occupational identity of nurse, which emphasizes caring and empathy, may have an easier time shifting to the role of parent of an infant than would an individual with the occupational identity of police officer, which emphasizes objectivity and toughness.

In her description of border theory, Clark (2000) includes flexibility and permeability and adds two additional characteristics: blending and strength. Clark notes that when there is a great degree of permeability and flexibility, border blending occurs. Permeability, flexibility, and blending together determine border strength. Strong borders are impermeable and inflexible and do not allow blending.

A final important characteristic of boundaries/borders is that they can be symmetrical or asymmetrical in terms of direction of movement. That is, the family domain may be more permeable than

the work domain or vice versa. For example, work–family conflict research shows that work-to-family conflict is more prevalent than is family-to-work conflict. Thus, the family domain is more permeable than is the work domain.

Theory Similarities and Differences

The basic tenets of boundary theory and border theory are essentially the same. Both theories provide frameworks intended to increase understanding concerning the ways in which individuals create and manage the boundaries between work and family. However, the origins of the two theories differ. Specifically, boundary theory was originally developed as a cognitive sociological perspective for understanding the processes and social implications related to the everyday distinctions that people make in life. Due to the difficulty in understanding the world as a whole, individuals tend to classify sets of entities into bounded categories (Zerubavel 1991). The theory has been applied to work–family interactions to better understand the meanings people assign to home and work (Nippert-Eng 1996) as well as the ease and frequency of transitioning between work and family roles (Ashforth et al. 2000, Desrochers & Sargent 2004). By contrast, border theory was developed in response to dissatisfaction with existing work–family theories and, as such, is limited to the work and family domains (Clark 2000). Nevertheless, in our view, the two are not distinct theories, but rather two articulations and extensions of the same basic underlying principles evolving from Hall & Richter (1988) and Nippert-Eng (1996). As most of the literature has adopted the term boundary over border, we too use the term boundary in the remaining sections.

BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT

Multiple constructs have been developed to test hypotheses developed out of boundary theory and border theory. The proliferation of constructs and the increasing quantity of research have resulted in terminological confusion with regard to construct labels and in a lack of definitional clarity. Such terminological confusion has been referred to as jingle and jangle fallacies (e.g., Block 1995). A jangle fallacy is a situation in which two things that are the same or nearly the same are labeled differently. A jingle fallacy occurs when two things that are different are labeled similarly and therefore may be incorrectly thought of as interchangeable. As is discussed below, jangle fallacies are particularly prevalent in the work–family boundary dynamics literature. This lack of precision in terminology can inhibit the ability to build cumulative knowledge (Block 1995). **Table 1** provides a brief overview of various constructs and sample items. As we review the constructs below, we identify conceptual and operational overlap. We also review the literature in terms of relationships between these constructs and other variables, primarily work–family conflict. The term work–family conflict is used when referring to work–family conflict in general or when referring to measures of work–family conflict that are bidirectional. We use the term work-to-family conflict to denote research that examines conflict originating from the work role that interferes with the family role and the term family-to-work conflict to denote research that examines conflict originating from the family role that interferes with the work role.

Integration/Segmentation

A key concept associated with boundary management is integration/segmentation. Integration and segmentation are the terms used to describe the ways in which we conceptualize and juxtapose home and work (Nippert-Eng 1996); they refer to the degree that aspects of one domain (work/family) are kept separate from the other domain (family/work) (Kreiner 2006). Work and family roles can be arrayed on a continuum that ranges from high segmentation (characterized by inflexible and

Table 1 Work–family boundary dynamics constructs, definitions, and sample items

Construct and definition	Author(s)	Sample item
Individual differences/attitudes		
Integration/segmentation preference *Extent that individuals wish to keep work and family roles separate*	Kossek et al. (2006)	"I don't like work issues creeping into my home life."
Work flexibility-willingness *Motivation to engage in movement across work and family domains*	Matthews & Barnes-Farrell (2010)	"I am not willing to take time off from my work to deal with my family and personal life responsibilities" (reverse scored).
(Perceived) flexibilities/supplies		
Work flexibility-ability *Perceived ability to contract or expand domain boundaries*	Matthews & Barnes-Farrell (2010)	"I am able to arrive and depart from work when I want in order to meet my family and my personal life responsibilities."
Flexibility perception *Belief that spatial and/or temporal boundaries are pliable*	Hyland (2000)	"I have the freedom to vary my work schedule."
Boundary control *General perceived control over work–nonwork boundaries*	Kossek et al. (2012)	"I control whether I combine my work and personal life activities throughout the day."
Permeations		
Permeability *Degree that elements from one domain may enter the other domain*	Clark (2002b)	"My family contacts me while I am at work."
Work-to-family transition *Number of physical and cognitive transitions made from one domain to the other*	Matthews et al. (2010)	"How often have you received calls from family members while at work?"
Cross-role interruption behaviors *Degree that individuals allow interruptions from one role to another*	Kossek et al. (2012)	"I respond to personal communications (e.g., emails, texts, and phone calls) during work."
Role referencing *Extent that an individual acknowledges one role while in a different role domain*	Olson-Buchanan & Boswell (2006)	"I talk about my home/personal life at work."

(*Continued*)

Table 1 (*Continued*)

Construct and definition	Author(s)	Sample item
Integration/segmentation enactment *Extent that an individual actually keeps work and family roles separate*	Kossek et al. (2006)	"I actively strive to keep my family and work-life separate."
Role blurring *Extent that an individual has the ability to contract or expand one domain boundary in response to demands from the other domain*	Desrochers et al. (2005)	"I tend to integrate my work and family duties when I work at home."
Psychological detachment from work *Sense of being away from the work situation*	Sonnentag & Fritz (2007)	"During time after work, I forget about work."
Work–family internal conflict *Psychological preoccupation with one role that interferes with the ability to fully engage in the other role while in the other role*	Carlson & Frone (2003)	"When you are at home, how often do you think about work-related problems?"
Dysfunctional permeations		
Interruptions *Degree to which intrusion from one role into the other occurs*	Desrochers et al. (2005)	"When I work at home, distraction often make it difficult to attend my work."
Family-to-work conflict *Extent to which family responsibilities interfere with work responsibilities*	Netemeyer et al. (1996)	"Things I want to do at work don't get done because of the demands of my family or spouse/partner."
Work-to-family conflict *Extent to which work responsibilities interfere with family responsibilities*	Netemeyer et al. (1996)	"Due to work-related duties, I have to make changes to my plans for family activities."

impermeable role boundaries) to high integration (characterized by flexible and permeable role boundaries). At full integration, there is no distinction between what is home and what is work, and the individual thinks and acts the same with all social partners (e.g., spouse, supervisors, friends) (Nippert-Eng 1996). At the other end of the spectrum, at full segmentation, the boundary between roles is distinct, with no conceptual, physical, or temporal overlap. For example, integrators freely discuss work with partners and share family stories with coworkers, whereas segmentors dislike talking about work with partners and refuse to reveal personal information to coworkers (Nippert-Eng 1996). Most individuals reside somewhere between these two extremes. There are costs and benefits associated with both: Integration can increase role blurring, but it is also

thought to make the transition between work and family roles easier (Ashforth et al. 2000). Segmentation facilitates the creation and maintenance of role boundaries and minimizes role blurring. However, segmentation also makes role interruptions and transitions between roles more challenging.

Preferences for integration/segmentation are distinguished from the enactment or use of actual integration/segmentation. Integration/segmentation preference is an individual difference variable that captures the degree that an individual favors merging work and family roles (integration) versus favors keeping work and family roles separate from one another (segmentation) (Kreiner 2006). The most commonly used measure of integration/segmentation preference, developed by Kreiner (2006), is skewed toward segmenting work from family. Sample items include "I don't like to have to think about work while I'm at home" and "I prefer to keep work life at work."

Research based on the Kreiner measure has yet to show a significant relationship between segmentation/integration preference and work-to-family conflict (Kreiner 2006, Powell & Greenhaus 2010, Shockley & Allen 2010) or between segmentation/integration preference and family-to-work conflict (Shockley & Allen 2010). However, in a study that focused on psychological interference between work and home, significant results were reported (Park & Jex 2011). Specifically, Park & Jex (2011) report that a preference for segmenting work from family was associated with less psychological work-to-family conflict, whereas a preference for segmenting family from work was associated with less psychological family-to-work conflict. It is interesting to note that psychological work–family conflict focuses on internal preoccupation with one role while in the other (e.g., thinking about work-related problems while at home). Thus, psychological work–family conflict is similar to role permeability as well as a lack of psychological detachment from work. The desire to keep work segmented from family has also been found to be negatively associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Rothbard et al. 2005).

Integration/segmentation enactment represents the degree that individuals actually keep work and family domains separate as part of an active attempt to manage work and nonwork roles. For example, segmentors are more likely to enact rules and practices that keep the work and family domains distinct, such as maintenance of separate schedules for work activities and family activities. Integrators, by contrast, would keep work and family activities on the same schedule (Nippert-Eng 1996). Integration/segmentation enactment is also referred to as a boundary management strategy (Kossek et al. 2006).

Integration/segmentation enactment has been assessed in several different ways. For example, Powell & Greenhaus (2010) modified the items developed by Kreiner (2006) to capture actual behavior versus preference (e.g., "I keep work life at work"). Kossek et al. (2006) developed a 12-item measure to assess what they referred to as boundary management strategy ("the degree to which one strives to separate boundaries between work and home roles"; p. 350). Sample items are "I only take care of personal needs at work when I am 'on break' or during my lunch hour" and "I prefer to not talk about my family issues with most people I work with." Several studies have used the work–family role integration–blurring scale, described below, to capture integration/segmentation (Ilies et al. 2009, Kossek et al. 2012, Li et al. 2013). We address the distinction (or lack thereof) between work–family role blurring and integration/segmentation in subsequent sections.

Research shows that actual segmentation of work and family roles is associated with less work-to-family conflict (Kinman & Jones 2008, Kossek et al. 2012, Powell & Greenhaus 2010), less family-to-work conflict (Kossek et al. 2006, 2012), and more work–family balance (Li et al. 2013). In addition, Ilies et al. (2009) found that integration moderated the strength of the spillover of daily job satisfaction onto positive and negative affect at home such that greater spillover occurred among those with highly integrated work and family roles. However, segmentation has also been

associated with less affective positive work-to-family spillover (Powell & Greenhaus 2010) and less positive family-to-work spillover (Kossek et al. 2012).

In sum, previous research suggests that segmentation/integration preferences do not relate to work–family conflict, with the exception of psychological interference. By contrast, actual segmentation relates to less work–family conflict as well as less positive work–family spillover.

Permeability and Flexibility

There is also research that examines integration/segmentation via assessment of boundary permeability and/or flexibility (e.g., Bulger et al. 2007, Olson-Buchanan & Boswell 2006). Recall that permeability and flexibility represent boundary strength. Segmentation is thought to exist when low flexibility is coupled with low permeability, whereas integration exists when high flexibility is coupled with high permeability. Research on boundary permeability and flexibility often takes a domain-specific directional approach. That is, boundary flexibility and permeability emanating from the work domain into the family domain are examined separately from boundary flexibility and permeability originating from the family domain into the work domain.

Permeability. Studies generally show a relationship between permeability and work–family conflict. Permeability is often operationalized using a measure developed by Clark (2002b), which uses sample items such as "My family contacts me while I am at work" and "I have family-related items at my workplace." Similarly worded items measure the family domain's permeability to work (e.g., "I receive work-related calls while I am at home").

Olson-Buchanan & Boswell (2006) report that both directions of permeability (work entering the family domain and family entering the work domain) were associated with more work-to-life conflict. Clark (2002b) found that permeability of the work border, but not the family border, was associated with greater work–family conflict. Several studies have found that greater permeability of the work domain relates to greater family-to-work conflict and that greater permeability of the family domain relates to greater work-to-family conflict (Bulger et al. 2007, Matthews & Barnes-Farrell 2010). Similar to integration/segmentation enactment, although greater permeability appears to foster work–family conflict, it may also facilitate positive relationships between work and family roles. Bulger et al. (2007) report that permeability of the work domain was associated with more family-to-work enhancement and that permeability of the family domain was associated with more work-to-family enhancement.

Flexibility. There is a large body of literature concerning flexible work arrangements in organizations (for a review, see Kossek & Michel 2011). Moreover, flexibility has been defined in multiple ways within the work–family boundary dynamics literature. Flexibility is the degree to which spatial and temporal boundaries are pliable. Sample items from Clark's (2002b) assessment of flexibility include "I am able to arrive and depart from work when I want" and "My family allows me to carry out work projects during spare minutes at home." Thus, flexibility has generally been assessed in terms of the capacity that one has to alter boundaries.

Matthews and colleagues expanded flexibility to include two dimensions: flexibility-ability and flexibility-willingness (Bulger et al. 2007, Matthews & Barnes-Farrell 2010, Matthews et al. 2010). Flexibility-ability is the perceived ability to contract or expand domain boundaries (e.g., "I am able to arrive and depart from work when I want in order to meet my family and my personal life responsibilities"). Flexibility-willingness is defined as the motivation to engage in movement between domains (e.g., "I am willing to change plans with my family so I can finish a job assignment"). Matthews et al. (2010) note that flexibility-ability maps onto perceived behavioral control and that flexibility-willingness represents an attitude toward the behavior.

This expanded conceptualization of flexibility also distinguishes the direction of the flexibility (work flexing for family, family flexing for work). For example, work flexibility-ability indicates that an employee is able to expand the work domain to meet family needs, whereas family flexibility-ability indicates that an employee is able to expand the family domain to meet work needs.

All three studies by Matthews and colleagues indicate that work flexibility-ability is associated with less work-to-family conflict and not associated with family-to-work conflict (Bulger et al. 2007, Matthews & Barnes-Farrell 2010, Matthews et al. 2010). In two of the three studies, family flexibility-ability related to both directions of conflict (Bulger et al. 2007, Matthews & Barnes-Farrell 2010). With regard to willingness, in two of the three studies, work flexibility-willingness related to work-to-family conflict but not to family-to-work conflict (Bulger et al. 2007, Matthews et al. 2010), and all three studies indicate that family flexibility-willingness does not relate to either direction of work-family conflict. Two studies by Clark (2002a,b) found that flexibility of work and of home borders was associated with less work–family conflict. The overall pattern of results indicates that flexibility is associated with less conflict and that there is trend toward domain specificity.

There is also some evidence that flexibility is associated with greater positive spillover between work and family. Bulger et al. (2007) report that work-to-family enhancement was positively related to work flexibility-ability and to family flexibility-willingness. In addition, family-to-work enhancement was positively associated with work flexibility-willingness and with family flexibility-ability.

Kossek et al. (2006) note the importance of distinguishing between descriptive assessments of use of flexibility (e.g., reporting that one telecommutes or does not telecommute) and psychological flexibility experiences that help to socially construct an individual's boundary management strategy. This is also important because individuals may use flexibility for a variety of reasons other than, or in addition to, work–family boundary management (Shockley & Allen 2012). However, we think it is instructive to review the relationships between work–family conflict and specific flexible work practices that are often a part of an individual's overall boundary management strategy. Within the flexible-work-arrangement literature, spatial flexibility is commonly referred to as telecommuting or flexplace, and temporal flexibility is referred to as flextime or scheduling flexibility. This literature includes studies that examine perceptions of the availability of flexibility as well as the use of flexibility (Allen et al. 2013). Perceptions of flexibility are analogous to flexibility-ability confined to the work domain and devoid of intended purpose (e.g., "I have the freedom to vary my work schedule"). A recent meta-analysis by Allen et al. (2013) showed that perceived availability of spatial flexibility had a very small but significant relationship with family-to-work conflict, but not with work-to-family conflict. Use of spatial flexibility had a very small but significant relationship with work-to-family conflict, but no relationship with family-to-work conflict. Temporal flexibility availability, but not use, had a small relationship with work-to-family conflict. No relationships were observed with family-to-work conflict.

The overall pattern of research suggests that constructs specifically developed for the work–family context (e.g., flexibility-ability) have stronger relationships with work–family conflict than do work-specific assessments of flexibility availability or use. Flexibility-ability may be somewhat conflated with support from the originating domain. For example, being able to leave work earlier to attend to family demands potentially captures not only flexibility originating from the work domain, but also that the work organization and/or supervisor is family supportive. This is important because meta-analyses examining workplace support (e.g., family-supportive organizational perceptions, family-supportive supervision) demonstrate effect sizes that are twice the size of flexibility alone in relationship to work–family conflict (Allen et al. 2013, Kossek et al. 2011).

Related Constructs

In the following sections, we review four additional constructs that are a part of studies that examine work–family boundary dynamics: role blurring, interruptions, psychological detachment from work, and work and family role transitions. In each case, we review and raise questions about the relationship the construct shares with other variables in the work–family boundary dynamics nomological net.

Role blurring. Role blurring is defined as uncertainty or difficulty in distinguishing one's work role from one's family role (Desrochers et al. 2005, Glavin & Schieman 2012). In her description of border theory, Clark (2000), who calls this phenomenon role blending, suggests that it occurs when there is a great deal of permeability and flexibility around borders. Similarly, Glavin & Schieman (2012) suggest that permeability is distinct from role blurring, serving the role of a necessary but not sufficient condition for role blurring to occur. However, based on the way in which role blurring has been operationalized, it is difficult to discern how it is unique from other work–family boundary constructs.

Two measures have been developed to assess role blurring. Desrochers et al. (2005) developed the Work–Family Integration–Blurring Scale (WFIBS), sample items from which include "It is often difficult to tell where my work life ends and my family life begins" and "I tend to integrate my work and family duties when I work at home." In some studies, the WFIBS has been used to operationalize integration/segmentation enactment (Ilies et al. 2009, Kossek et al. 2012, Li et al. 2013). A sample item used by Glavin & Schieman (2012) to measure role blurring is as follows: "How often do coworkers, supervisors, managers, customers, or clients contact you about work-related matters outside of normal work hours? Include telephone, cell phone, beeper, and pager calls, as well as faxes and email that you have to respond to." This and other items from Glavin & Schieman are similar to items used to capture interruptions as well as a lack of psychological detachment from work, which are discussed below.

Research on role blurring shows that it is positively related to overall work–family conflict (Desrochers et al. 2005) and to both directions of work–family conflict (Glavin & Schieman 2012, Matthews et al. 2010). Several studies have also shown that greater role blurring is associated with a greater number of transitions between work and family roles (Desrochers et al. 2005, Matthews et al. 2010). Role blurring has also been associated with greater frequency of home distractions disrupting work when working at home (Desrochers et al. 2005).

Interruptions. Some researchers have investigated constructs referred to as interruptions (or alternatively as distractions) that have relevance to boundary management (e.g., Cardenas et al. 2004, Kossek et al. 2012). Interruptions refer to intrusions from one role into another. Directionality is important because interruptions from the family domain while within the work role are distinguished from interruptions from the work domain while in the family role.

Interruptions have been assessed in different ways. Some assessments focus on either the number or the type of interruptions. For example, Cardenas et al. (2004) assessed interruptions by asking a sample of working mothers to report the total number of hours per week they feel distracted by family/home thoughts or interruptions while working. A similar question was asked to capture work distractions while in the family role. The two directions of distraction were correlated at .53. Kossek et al. (2012) used a measure developed by Kossek & Lautsch (2008), originally labeled work–family integration, to measure the two directions of interruptions. A sample item representing nonwork-to-work interruptions is "I respond to personal communications (e.g., email, texts, and phone calls) during work," and a sample item representing work interrupting nonwork is "I regularly bring work home."

Other assessments capture reactions to cross-role interruptions (e.g., "When I work at home, distractions often make it difficult to attend to my work"; Desrochers et al. 2005). Olson-Buchanan & Boswell (2006) examined reactions to interruptions flowing from both directions (e.g., "I get upset or annoyed when I am interrupted by my personal/family life at work," "I get upset or annoyed when I am interrupted by work-related problems during my 'off-work' hours"). Another variation in measurement is the extent that an interruption is self-generated versus externally imposed.

Kossek et al. (2012) report evidence that more family-interrupting-work behaviors were associated with less work-to-family conflict and more family-to-work conflict. More work-interrupting-family behaviors were associated with more work–family conflict occurring in both directions. Similarly, Olson-Buchanan & Boswell (2006) report that the reaction to work interrupting nonwork was associated with work-to-life conflict. Desrochers et al. (2005) also showed that more interruptions were associated with greater work–family conflict and greater work–family blurring.

Psychological detachment from work. Psychological detachment from work is a state in which people mentally disconnect from work and do not think about job-related issues when away from the job (Sonnentag 2012). Detachment is one way in which individuals create distance between work and nonwork. In addition, detachment from work is thought to be important for recovery from work to occur (e.g., Sonnentag & Bayer 2005). Individuals who do not detach from work remain cognitively preoccupied with work-related events and experiences (Sonnentag & Binnewies 2013, Sonnentag et al. 2008). Detachment is commonly measured using a scale developed by Sonnentag & Fritz (2007). Sample items include "During time after work, I forget about work" and "During time after work, I don't think about work at all."

There is a considerable body of research with regard to predictors and outcomes associated with detachment. Individuals who detach from work report higher psychological well-being, greater positive daily outcomes (affective states, sleep quality, etc.), and higher job performance than do those who remain attached (Sonnentag 2012). In addition, Lapierre et al. (2012) recently found that greater psychological detachment from work was associated with less work-to-family conflict but that it was not related to family-to-work conflict. Regarding antecedents of detachment, research indicates that greater negative affect, job involvement, and job stressors are associated with less detachment (Sonnentag 2012). In addition, involvement in meaningful off-job activities (e.g., volunteer work) and time in restorative environments (e.g., a natural environment) promote detachment.

Park et al. (2011) examined the relationship between integration/segmentation preferences and detachment. The zero-order correlation between the two variables was .46, indicating that individuals who prefer to segment work from family also have greater psychological detachment from work outside of regular work hours. In addition, both variables were negatively related to the frequency of use of technology at home. Hahn & Dormann (2013) found a similar moderately strong positive relationship ($r = .41$) between preference for segmentation and detachment from work. Hahn & Dormann also report that a preference for integration by one spouse negatively related to the other spouse's detachment. Sonnentag et al. (2010) examined actual segmentation by asking participants to report spatial (if participants had an office within their private home or not) and technological boundaries (if participants used the same phone number for work and private phone calls or they had separate phone lines). Results indicated that detachment is positively associated with spatial, but not technological, boundary segmentation.

Work and family role transitions. Several decades ago, Hall & Richter (1988) noted that an important way to understand work–family interactions is to study transitions between the two domains. Hall & Richter identified three transition styles: anticipatory, discrete, and lagged. Those

who follow an anticipatory style become concerned with the domain of destination prior to physically leaving the current domain. For those who follow the discrete style, concern with the domain of destination starts upon arrival there. In the lagged style, concern with the newly entered domain does not begin until the individual has been present in the new domain for a period of time. Hall & Richter (1988) reported that individuals tended to use an anticipatory style when moving from home to work and a discrete style when moving from work to home. Gender differences were also observed. The transition from work to home was particularly stressful for women. Women tended to arrive earlier and shift more quickly into the home role, whereas men were more likely to go through an unwinding period.

Campos et al. (2009) studied transitions from work to home via naturalistic observation. A total of 32 dual-earner couples and their children were observed and recorded throughout two weekday afternoons and evenings. The study observed what the authors called the reunion, which was the first encounter that an employed parent had with his or her family members, spouse, or children who were already home at the time of arrival into the home. The focus was on the two minutes after a parent arrived home directly from work. Five different types of reunion behaviors were identified. In order of frequency of occurrence they included positive behaviors (e.g., hugs, salutations), information reports (e.g., sharing information about the day), logistic behaviors (e.g., requesting help), distraction (e.g., not acknowledging return), and negative behaviors (e.g., criticism). Similar to Hall & Richter (1988), Campos et al. (2009) found that mothers tended to arrive home earlier than fathers. Mothers were mostly welcomed with positive behaviors and information reports, whereas fathers who tended to arrive later were greeted with positive behaviors but also with logistical details from spouses and distraction from children. Campos et al. (2009) also studied patterns of interaction that occurred throughout the evening. Mothers were more likely to spend time with children, whereas fathers were more likely to spend time alone. In other words, fathers were more likely to establish a physical boundary from the rest of the family in the evening.

Several studies on boundary management have investigated the frequency of transitions between work and family domains. Matthews et al. (2010) created a measure of interdomain transitions that captures the number of physical and cognitive transitions made from one domain to the other. They assert that interdomain transition is a more theoretically grounded construct than is permeability and that it should replace permeability. Moreover, they suggest that flexibility should permit the flow between boundaries and as such serve as an antecedent to interdomain transitions. They define interdomain transitions as the number of physical and cognitive transitions made from one domain to the other. Sample items from their measure include "How often have you thought about family responsibilities while at work?" and "How often have you gone into work on the weekend to meet work responsibilities?"

Matthews et al. (2010) found that an increase in work-to-family transitions was associated with greater role blurring and increased work–family conflict in both directions. The same relationships were found with an increase in family-to-work transitions. In addition, an increase in work-to-family transitions was associated with more work flexibility-ability and work flexibility-willingness and less family flexibility-ability. An increase in family-to-work transitions was associated with more of both forms of family flexibility (ability and willingness) and with less work flexibility-willingness.

Using a time chart of the most recent day at home, Desrochers et al. (2005) measured transitions with two items that captured the frequency of transitions between work and parenting roles and between work and house chores. Frequency of transitions was associated with greater role blurring, but not with work–family conflict or interruptions.

Summary

As we described earlier, a review of the constructs listed above demonstrates considerable conceptual and operational overlap. Our concern is that the developing body of literature is becoming fragmented. By measuring work–family boundary dynamics with similar, but slightly different, constructs and/or using different labels that represent similar or the same constructs without demonstrating that such differentiation captures unique variance, accumulation of knowledge and subsequent theoretical advancement are potentially limited. **Table 1** demonstrates overlap and linkages. In an effort to create a foundation for consistent thinking about boundary management, we offer several recommendations:

1. We contend that role blurring is redundant with integration enactment and/or inter-role interruptions, both conceptually and operationally. Measures used to assess integration/segmentation should not associate the outcome with the behavior; that is, assessments should capture the extent that individuals integrate, rather than the difficulty associated with doing so.
2. Measures of interruptions should also separate experience from reaction to the experience. In addition, we recommend that assessments of interruptions distinguish the source of the interruption and be limited to those that come from outside sources (e.g., supervisor calling at home, spouse calling at work). Internally generated interruptions that reflect psychological preoccupation with one role that interferes with the ability to engage in the other role are redundant with internal interference and strain-based conceptualizations of work–family conflict (Carlson & Frone 2003, Greenhaus & Beutell 1985).
3. The role of permeability and flexibility should be reconsidered. Boundary theory suggests that permeability and flexibility represent boundary strength. If integration/segmentation enactment is viewed as volitional, flexibility provides the conditions that facilitate or inhibit one's ability to enact one's preferred boundary management strategies. For example, if one's work and home life are physically intertwined (e.g., telecommuting), there may be less opportunity to volitionally segment. Flexibility then serves as a moderator of the integration/segmentation preferences–integration/segmentation enactment relationship. However, we suggest that the flexibility-willingness construct developed by Matthews and colleagues (Bulger et al. 2007, Matthews & Barnes-Farrell 2010, Matthews et al. 2010) overlaps with integration/segmentation preferences to a high degree. Moreover, perceptions of available flexibility (flexibility-ability) and perceived boundary control are also highly overlapping. Matthews et al. (2010) noted that flexibility-ability maps onto perceived behavioral control, whereas flexibility-willingness represents an attitude toward the behavior. These underscore the need for additional conceptual and psychometric work to be conducted to understand the relationship between flexibility-willingness and preferences for integration/segmentation.
4. We believe the literature would benefit from greater parsing of the flexibility-availability and boundary control constructs. Kossek et al. (2012, p. 114) stated that the construct is not a personal trait but rather "psychological interpretations of perceived control over one's boundary environment." It would seem that flexibility offered by the situation (e.g., flexibility-availability) would predict interpretation of the environment. However, the Kossek et al. items (e.g., "I control whether I have clear boundaries between my work and personal life") also appear to tap into elements of locus of control or self-efficacy with regard to one's ability to balance work and family boundaries (Butler et al. 2004).

5. Permeability may be construed as a latent construct that is composed of other existing constructs, such as interruptions, role transitions, and internal work–family conflict, that link the work and family domains.

The following example is intended to help illustrate how the manifestation of various constructs of interest may unfold. An employee at home having dinner with the family receives a phone call from her manager. The phone call itself is a cross-role interruption. Those who prefer integration would be more likely to take the call, whereas those who prefer segmentation would be less likely to take the call. Taking or not taking the call is integration or segmentation enactment, respectively. However, flexibility will also determine the response. If the employee has little flexibility and perceives that she is required to take calls from her boss in the evening, she will be more likely to take the call, regardless of preference. This event is also a work–family conflict. If the employee excuses herself from dinner and takes the call, a role transition has occurred and work has interfered with family. If the employee does not take the call, no role transition occurs; if the employee is expected to take work calls from home, family has interfered with work. If the employee continues to dwell on the call throughout the evening, a lack of psychological detachment from work is exemplified.

BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT TACTICS/STYLES

The boundary management strategies discussed in previous sections capture the integration/segmentation continuum at a global level. Several frameworks have been developed that capture multidimensional ways in which to view boundary management. The common purpose of these studies is to theoretically and empirically unpack the integration/segmentation continuum (Ammons 2013). One line of research identifies specific boundary management tactics that individuals use to help create their ideal level and style of work–home integration or segmentation (Kreiner et al. 2009, Sturges 2012). Another line of research is based on person-centered approaches that identify different boundary management styles used by individuals (Ammons 2013, Kossek et al. 2012). We review both approaches in the following sections.

Tactics

Based on qualitative work with priests, Kreiner et al. (2009, p. 704) identified four categories, with additional categories subsumed within each, of tactics that individuals use "to help create their ideal level of and style of work-home segmentation or integration": behavioral, temporal, physical, and communication. Behavioral tactics involve using other people (e.g., getting help from others), leveraging technology (e.g., creating multiple email accounts), invoking triage (e.g., prioritizing), and allowing differential permeability (e.g., choosing the specific aspects of work–home life that will/will not be permeable). Temporal tactics involve controlling work time (e.g., blocking off segments of time) and finding respite (e.g., removing oneself from work/home demands for a significant amount of time). Physical tactics are adapting physical boundaries (e.g., erecting or dismantling barriers between work and home domains), manipulating physical space (e.g., creating or reducing physical distance between work and home domains), and managing physical artifacts (e.g., using tangible items such as photos to separate or blend aspects of each domain). Communication tactics involve setting expectations (e.g., informing others about expectations in advance of boundary violations) and confronting violators (e.g., telling violators of boundaries during or after a boundary violation). Kreiner et al. (2009) suggest that the implementation of multiple tactics should have a synergistic effect that helps reduce work–family conflict.

Sturges (2012) also took a qualitative approach to identify the techniques and activities used by young professionals to manage their work–life balance. She refers to these as "crafting" behaviors

because they are proactive, self-initiated, and goal oriented. Three different forms, with additional types within each, of crafting behavior were identified: physical, cognitive, and relational. Physical crafting includes temporal crafting (e.g., leaving work in time for dinner with family), locational crafting (e.g., working away from the office to deal with home-related tasks), choosing a job (e.g., selecting a job that facilitates work–family balance), and reducing travel time (e.g., living close to work to reduce commute). Cognitive crafting includes defining work–life balance (e.g., framing work–life balance in a way that it can be achieved), prioritizing work (e.g., justify time spent at work), and making compromises (e.g., sacrificing balance now for future gain). Relational crafting includes managing work relationships (e.g., using relationships with colleagues to facilitate work–family balance) and managing out-of-work relationships (e.g., using relationships with family to facilitate work–family balance).

Styles

Bulger et al. (2007) used cluster analysis to create boundary management profiles based on responses to measures of boundary strength (i.e., flexibility and permeability). Cluster 1 was made up of individuals who had high scores on all of the boundary strength measures, which indicated an integration preference. Cluster 2 was composed of individuals who could and would leave work to attend to family demands, but for whom family issues only occasionally permeated the work domain. Cluster 2 members could integrate rather than segment domains, but they did not have a strong preference or reason to do so. Those who fell into Cluster 3 showed relatively neutral scores on all measures of boundary strength except for negative work flexibility–ability, which was low. Cluster 4 members reported high work flexibility and permeability, but low personal-life flexibility and permeability. These individuals tended to flex their work domain but shield their personal lives. Overall, the results suggest that individuals veer more toward integration than segmentation.

Kossek and colleagues have coined the term flexstyles to refer to the approaches individuals use to demarcate boundaries and attend to work versus family and other nonwork roles, given identity centralities and perceived boundary control (Kossek & Lautsch 2008, Kossek et al. 2012). Kossek & Lautsch (2008) initially identified three boundary management styles: integrators, separators, and volleyers. Integrators completely blend the work and family domains, whereas separators keep them distinct. Volleyers switch back and forth between the two strategies. Individuals are further classified based on the whether or not they have high or low boundary control. Those with high boundary control are able to create the boundary arrangement that best suits them.

Kossek et al. (2012) refer to flexstyles as a person-centered approach. They suggest that examining how psychological measures comprise configurations of personal attributes is valuable for capturing boundary management style functioning. There are three characteristics associated with work–nonwork boundary management: cross-role interruption behaviors, role identity centrality, and perceived boundary control. Cross-role interruption behaviors are the degree to which individuals allow interruptions from one role to the other, attentive to the directionality. Role identity centrality reflects identity salience and indicates the relative value the individual places on his or her different identities. Perceived boundary control is perceived control over one's boundary environment.

Combining cross-role interruption behaviors, role identity salience, and perceived boundary control yields six possible styles: work warriors, overwhelmed reactors, family guardians, fusion lovers, dividers, and nonwork-ecletics. As an example, low boundary control, work-centric individuals who have greater work-to-nonwork interruptions represent the work-warrior style, whereas those with high boundary control, dual-centric, separator interruption behaviors (the lowest scores on interruption behaviors in both directions) are referred to as dividers.

Ammons (2013) conducted a qualitative study of employees working in an environment that encouraged them to work whenever and wherever, as long as the work was completed. The goal of the study was to separate preferred boundaries from enacted boundaries within a context in which individuals were being given more control over their environments. Focusing on the purpose and meaning of boundaries, Ammons observed four types of styles. The first and most common style was called protecting family. Individuals who fell in this category kept work and family apart by leaving work-related thoughts and tasks at work. The second most common category was labeled above and beyond. Individuals using this style had little to no integration of family life into the work domain. There were two subgroups within this category: Eager above and beyonders were heavily invested in work and enjoyed it, and reluctant above and beyonders were resentful or wary about integrating. The third category was referred to as enhancing family. This group kept work from infringing on family and found ways to integrate family into the standard workday. The fourth category was labeled holistic boundaries. Individuals within this group experienced work and life domains as one synergistic whole in terms of thoughts, use of space, behavior, and time. These individuals aspired to lead a balanced life that intermingled work and family.

Summary

Together these studies help to highlight the various ways in which individuals engage in different tactics in order to create their preferred boundaries between work and family, and the different boundary management styles that emerge from the use of preferred strategies. One of the commonalities is the recognition that boundaries vary along physical, behavioral, and psychological dimensions. **Figure 1** begins to map preferred and enacted boundary management together with these various dimensions. The horizontal pole represents integration/segmentation preferences, whereas the vertical pole represents integration/segmental enactment. The inner circles represent the notion that both preferences and enactment may vary with regard to physical, behavioral, and psychological boundary management. Congruence occurs when an individual is able to enact their preferred mode of boundary management. Flexibility availability is shown along the bottom of the figure to signify that the capacity to enact one's preferred boundary management strategy is impacted by the flexibility of the environment.

As research on boundary management tactics and styles continues, it may be useful to develop measures that more precisely capture and distinguish the physical, behavioral, and psychological aspects of integration/segmentation. For example, psychological detachment from work can be considered a specific segmenting strategy within the psychological domain. Individuals may have different preferences and propensity to enact boundaries across these different dimensions. As in the cases of job satisfaction and work–family conflict, there may be circumstances when a global assessment is useful, but also cases in which more fine-grained information is needed.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As mentioned above, interest in work–family boundary dynamics has grown considerably in the past several decades. Although a substantial body of research has developed, many areas for further inquiry remain. Below are several suggestions for future areas of focus.

Methodology

A rich foundation of qualitative research underlies much of the previous and ongoing work in work–family boundary management (e.g., Hall & Richter 1988, Kreiner et al. 2009, Nippert-Eng

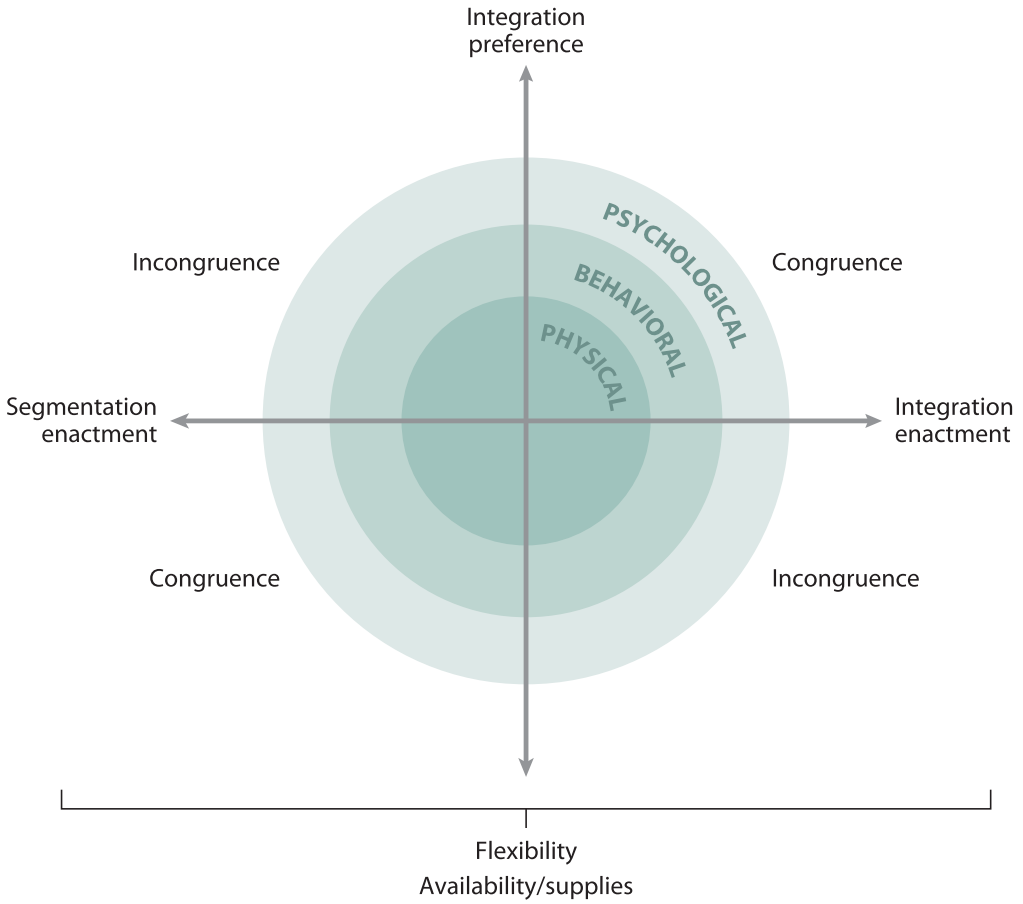

Figure 1

Boundary management map.

1996). With the exception of psychological detachment from work, which is primarily associated with the stress and recovery literature, most of the quantitative research focused on work and family boundary dynamics has been based on single-source, cross-sectional designs. Research that better captures the dynamic nature of boundary management is needed.

Event-based experience sampling studies that record transition moments would be especially useful. This research could begin by building on the observational research studies on reunions described earlier (see Campos et al. 2009). A line of research with such a focus is needed to gain insight into the daily management of enacted boundaries.

Multisource data would also improve the empirical contribution of current work. Others in the social system can impact the extent that individuals are able to enact preferred boundary management strategies. For example, Hahn & Dormann (2013) report that a preference for integration by one spouse negatively related to the other spouse's detachment. Moreover, the presence of children buffered the relationship. Along these lines, further examination of boundary dynamics between working parents and their children, particularly in terms of the use of technology, would be a useful addition to the literature. Turkle (2011) has described how children and adolescents are concerned about the lack of attention from their parents who are distracted by their phones during dinner, sporting events, and when picking them up from school. Parents feel pressure to keep up with work email and other messages. This underscores the need to take into account the impact of organizational policies and expectations with regard to availability. Recall that Park et al. (2011) found that those who were less likely to use technology at home also reported greater psychological

detachment from work, which has been associated with a variety of positive outcomes (Sonnentag 2012). Said another way, the more technology a person has, the more ways he or she can be connected to work, and thus detachment does not occur. One implication for organizations is to set limits on the extent that technology use after hours is encouraged and/or mandated.

Boundary Dynamics at the Extremes

The study of individuals in extremely integrated or segmented work and family situations may help us better understand work–family boundary dynamics. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, boundary blurring was commonplace, as the household often served as the site of economic production (Glavin & Schieman 2012). The Industrial Revolution ushered in the idealized "traditional" family characterized by a full-time homemaker wife and mother and a breadwinner husband and father (Pruitt & Rapoport 2008). During this time, the industrialization of paid work required the construction of a separate public sphere of paid work, whereas unpaid work (e.g., parenting, housekeeping) was the concern of the private, family sphere (Parsons & Bales 1955). As women began to enter the workforce in increasing numbers, the previously separate public and private spheres of life became intimately connected (Kanter 1977).

One example of extreme integration is bed-and-breakfast (B&B)–type businesses. The B&B industry is growing, with recent estimates indicating that there are approximately 17,000 such properties within the United States with 79% of innkeepers living on the premises (**http://www.innkeeping.org/?The_Industry**). Such living and work arrangements can make work and family boundary management particularly challenging (Li et al. 2013). Research on work-linked couples also permits the opportunity to gain insights into boundary management at the extremes. Work-linked couples are those who can be linked by their work in one of three ways: sharing an occupation, sharing a workplace, or sharing both an occupation and a workplace (Halbesleben et al. 2010). Employees in work-linked relationship reported less time-based work-to-family conflict, but greater strain-based work-to-family conflict and more spouse social support than did employees in non-work-linked relationships (e.g., Halbesleben et al. 2012). Being in a work-linked relationship may permit a better flow of resources across work and family role boundaries while creating more opportunity for strain-based work–family conflict. As an example of extreme separation, there are trends—such as an increase in commuter marriages—creating conditions in which physical separation of boundaries is expanding (Brambila 2012). A commuter marriage is one in which a married couple is living apart. More than 3.5 million couples in the United States are in commuter marriages, which is a number that has more than doubled since 1990. This form of family arrangement can have unique challenges for boundary management as well (Van der Klis & Karsten 2009). Overall, comparative research of different family structures may yield new insights into work–family boundary dynamics.

Self-Regulation Perspective

Transitioning across roles is an effortful process that involves self-regulation. For example, controlling thoughts about work while at home requires willpower. To achieve a desired boundary between work and family, individuals may have to regulate emotions that they experience (i.e., emotion regulation; Gross 1998), for example by suppressing negative emotions from work and/or expressing positive emotions to family members. As such, drawing from theory and research on self-regulation may enable a better understanding of the psychological processes involved in boundary management. The strength model of self-control explains the way in which effortful self-regulation draws on finite resources and impacts subsequent performance of behaviors necessitating self-regulation (Baumeister et al. 2007). This model suggests that individuals may find it difficult to

effectively transition across roles when their self-regulatory resources are depleted. Sonnentag et al. (2010) report that emotional dissonance at work, which resulted from the necessity to display positive emotions that did not correspond to what was felt, was negatively associated with psychological detachment from work.

Along these lines, research that incorporates mindfulness as a self-regulation and boundary management strategy could be useful. Mindfulness refers to "intentionally paying attention to present-moment experience (physical sensations, perceptions, affective states, thoughts, and imagery) in a nonjudgmental way, thereby cultivating a stable and nonreactive awareness" (Carmody et al. 2008). The propensity to be more mindful has been associated with greater work–family balance (Allen & Kiburz 2012). The cultivation of mindfulness may better enable individuals to psychologically detach from one role and transition to another. Moreover, such research has implications for organizations as more organizations such as Google begin to implement training based on mindfulness principles (Kelly 2012).

Cross-National/Cultural Research

Although cross-national and cross-cultural work–family research has grown considerably over the past decade (Poelmans et al. 2013), the investigation of boundary dynamics has been limited primarily to Western contexts. This is surprising because in their articulation of boundary theory, Ashforth et al. (2000) suggested that the culture in which an individual is embedded likely affects the segmentation and integration of roles and the transition process between them. Specifically, the authors proposed that individuals from collectivistic, feminine, low-uncertainty-avoidance, and/or low-power-distance cultures would be more likely to integrate than segment roles. Allen (2013) suggests that work–family researchers consider work–family-specific values that may vary across cultures. Specifically, rather than mapping existing cultural values onto integration/segmentation (e.g., members of collectivistic cultures are more likely to prefer integration versus segmentation), she suggests that integration/segmentation could be considered a value at the cultural level, unique from existing values. The fluidity and ease with which individuals cross work and family boundaries may differ across cultural and national contexts. Moreover, variation in physical boundary space may be of particular interest given the way in which it varies across countries. For example, in Canada, the average home contains 2.6 rooms per person living in the home, as compared with Mexico, which contains 1.0 room per person living in the home (OECD 2011). Larger homes may facilitate the inclusion of a home office, thus increasing the likelihood of role permeation.

CONCLUSION

Boundary management is essentially concerned with how individuals can successfully navigate the intersection between the work and nonwork aspects of life. In this article, we reviewed and synthesized the literature on work–family boundary dynamics, demonstrating the importance of attending to the conceptual development and operationalization of key constructs in the literature. We also highlighted several avenues for future research that we believe are promising.

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